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EXAMINER

GELLNER, JEFFREY L

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3643

DATE MAILED: 09/21/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/691,016

Applicant(s)

MORRIS ET AL.

Examiner

Jeffrey L. Gellner

Art Unit

3643

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 August 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 38-47, 51-54, 58, 59, 63-66 and 79-84 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 67-75 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed. 66
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 38-47, 51-54, 58, 59, 63-73 and 79-84 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. §103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 38, 40-42, 83, and 84 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view of Green (US 3,232,034).

As to Claims 38, 40-42, 83, and 84, Brumat discloses an apparatus for mechanized vineyard cultivation comprising a first tool mechanical pruner, a cutting tool ("operating arms for topping that are substitutable and interchangeable" of col. 2 lines 18-26; 20 of Fig. 1); a mechanical second tool shoot thinner, a striking tool ("operating arms intended for bud/sucker removal" of col. 2 lines 7-8 in that the suckers are removed; 20 of Fig. 5). Not disclosed is a fruit thinning after shoot thinning using a mechanical fruit thinner; where all the tools are mounted on a vehicle. Green, however, discloses a fruit thinner (col. 6 lines 72-75) used after shoot thinning (from "effective for thinning fruit at any stage" of col. 6 lines 72-75). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the apparatus of Brumat by using the fruit thinner of Green so as to use more effective tools for each operation, and further, to mechanize the fruit thinner so as to reduce production costs by reducing labor costs and to combine the tools on one vehicle so as to increase efficiency of use of

Art Unit: 3643

farm vehicles. The apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green inherently discloses the method steps recited in claim 38.

Claims 39, 43, and 44-46 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view of Green (US 3,232,034) in further view of Hiyama et al. (US 4,255,922).

As to claims 39, 43, and 44, the limitations of Claim 38 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is the apparatus further comprising a mechanical harvester that is a shaker tool. Hiyama et al., however, further discloses a harvester that is a shaker (col. 18 lines 26-35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green by adding a mechanical harvester as disclosed by Hiyama et al. so as reduce costs of harvest. The apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green and Hiyama et al. inherently perform the method steps recited in claim 39.

As to claim 45, Brumat as modified by Green and Hiyama et al. further disclose a cutting bar (Fig. 2 of Brumat).

As to claim 46, Brumat as modified by Green and Hiyama et al. further disclose a plurality of strikers (27 of Brumat).

Claims 47, 51, 52, and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view Green (US 3,232,034) in further view of Mead et al. (US 4,383,400).

As to claim 47, the limitations of Claim 38 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is the method(apparatus) step comprising leaf removal. Mead et al., however, discloses an apparatus for leaf removal (“foliage trimming” of col. 2 lines 46-50). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green by adding a means for leaf removal as disclosed by Mead et al. so as to promote higher yield (col. 1 lines 15-18).

As to claim 51, the limitations of Claim 39 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is the method(apparatus) step comprising a canopy adjustment by removing a portion of the canopy on a single curtain trellis. Mead et al., however, discloses an apparatus for removing a portion of the canopy (“foliage trimming” of col. 2 lines 46-50). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green by adding a means for canopy adjustment (removal) as disclosed by Mead et al. so as to promote higher yield (col. 1 lines 15-18) and to use on a single curtain trellis depending upon the available type of trellis.

As to Claims 52 and 58, Brumat discloses an apparatus for mechanized grape cultivation comprising a mechanical pruner (“operating arms for topping that are substitutable and interchangeable” of col. 2 lines 18-26; 20 of Fig. 1); a mechanical shoot thinner (“operating arms intended for bud/sucker removal” of col. 2 lines 7-8 in that the suckers are removed; 20 of Fig. 5). Not disclosed is a fruit thinning after shoot thinning using a mechanical fruit thinner, with the thinner and other tools combined on one vehicle, before fruit is ready for harvest and opening centers of a top portion and keeping the centers clean with a mechanical unit; the grapes trained on GDC or divided canopy trellis systems. Green, however, discloses a fruit thinner (col. 6 lines

Art Unit: 3643

72-75) used after shoot thinning (from “effective for thinning fruit at any stage” of col. 6 lines 72-75) with a mechanical thinner before harvest and further, to mechanize the fruit thinner so as to reduce production costs by reducing labor costs and to combine the tools on one vehicle so as to increase efficiency of use of farm vehicles; Mead et al. discloses opening centers of a top portion of the vine (Fig. 6, col. 3 lines 26-32 in that when used with GDC or divided canopy trellises); and, it obvious to use a GDC trellis system as a common system. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the apparatus of Brumat by using the fruit thinner of Green so as to use more effective tools for each operation; to open centers and maintain them open as disclosed by Mead et al. so as to remove unneeded foliage; and, to use the GDC system as a common system. The apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green and Mead et al. inherently discloses the method steps recited in claim 52.

Claims 53 and 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view of Green (US 3,232,034) and Mead et al. (US 4,383,400) in further view of Hiyama et al. (US 4,255,922).

As to claim 53, the limitations of Claim 52 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is the method further comprising a mechanical harvester. Hiyama et al., however, further discloses a mechanical harvester (col. 18 lines 26-35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green and Mead et al. by adding a mechanical harvester as disclosed by Hiyama et al. so as reduce costs of harvest. The apparatus of Brumat as modified by Mead et al. and Hiyama et al. inherently perform the method steps recited in claim 53.

As to claim 59, the limitations of Claim 58 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is the method further comprising a mechanical harvester. Hiyama et al., however, further discloses a mechanical harvester (col. 18 lines 26-35). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green and Mead et al. by adding a mechanical harvester as disclosed by Hiyama et al. so as reduce costs of harvest. The apparatus of Brumat as modified by Mead et al. and Hiyama et al. inherently perform the method steps recited in claim 53.

Claim 54 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view of Green (US 3,232,034) and Mead et al. (US 4,383,400) in further view of Oldridge (US 5,101,618; 24th document on page 2 of Applicant's 1449).

As to claim 54, the limitations of Claim 52 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed is a shoot positioner. Oldridge, however, discloses a shoot positioner (abstract). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to further modify the apparatus of Brumat as modified by Green and Mead et al. by adding a shoot positioner as disclosed by Oldridge so as to increase light penetration into the fruit zone (see Oldridge at col. 1 lines 9-12).

Claims 63-66 and 79-82 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Brumat (US 4,257,213) in view of Green (US 3,232,034) and Mead et al. (US 4,383,400) in further view of Hiyama et al. (US 4,255,922).

Art Unit: 3643

As to claims 63-66, Brumat as modified by Green, Mead et al. and Hiyama et al. disclose these method steps as shown above. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the individual steps as to there time of implementation depending upon growing practices that are well known in the viticultural art and to use the different trellis systems depending upon availability and ease of use and to make the fruit thinner hand-held free so as to reduce production costs by reducing labor costs.

As to claims ⁷⁹~~80~~-82, these are obvious variation of the above when considering commonly known agronomic/horticultural cropping systems for grapes.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 7 August 2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicants' arguments are: (1) Green teaches only a hand held wand that is positioned by an operator while the invention, and claim language, calls for a mechanized, hand-held free fruit thinner (Remarks page 11 bottom half of page; page 12 top half of page; page 13, 1st para.); (2) none of the prior art recites the steps with a mechanical pruner, mechanical shoot thinner, mechanical fruit thinner, leaf removal machine, mechanical pruning unit, and mechanical harvester coupled to a vehicle (Remarks page 13, 2nd para.); and, (3) buds and suckers are not the same (Remarks page 13, bottom of page).

As to argument (1), Examiner considers to be mechanized so far as the thinning step is done with mechanical "fingers" and not completely by the operator. Further, the Examiner considers it obvious to mechanize virtually any agricultural step or method. It is well known to one of ordinary skill in the agronomic/horticultural arts the problem of profitability of producers

Art Unit: 3643

and finding farm labor. Hence, one of ordinary skill would be well motivated to completely mechanize fruit thinning so as to reduce the need for “operators.”

As to argument (2) Examiner considers it obvious to one of ordinary skill in the agronomic/horticultural arts to add more “tools” to one machine/vehicle. Brumat, in fact, discloses the combining of sucker removal, bud removal, and topping of vines. Further, Mead et al., discloses a machine for both leaf and fruit removal and positioning (Mead et al. at col. 1 lines 30-32).

As to argument (3), Examiner considers Brumat to disclose “shoot thinning” because the general concept of “bud/sucker” removal disclosed in Brumat (for example col. 2 lines 7-8) denotes a shoot since some suckers would have buds (a sucker with buds is considered a shoot).

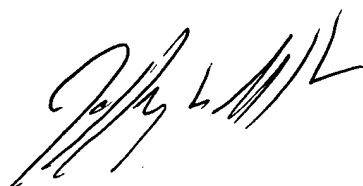
Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jeffrey L. Gellner whose telephone number is 571.272.6887. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:00, alternate.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner’s supervisor, Peter Poon can be reached on 571.272.6891. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3643

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. L. Gellner', is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Jeffrey L. Gellner
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3643